

28 March 2017

## **HESTA scholarship granted to 10 rural health students to inspire their future leadership**

Ten university students with a passion for rural and remote health are the winners of a new scholarship provided by superannuation fund, HESTA, in partnership with Rural Health Workforce Australia.

The scholarship will enable these aspiring future health leaders to attend the National Rural Health Conference in Cairns from 26-29 April. The conference attracts more than 1,000 delegates, including inspirational health advocates and political figures.

Two Indigenous students were among the scholarship winners chosen from more than 150 applicants belonging to university Rural Health Clubs affiliated with the National Rural Health Student Network.

HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey, said more than 150 outstanding scholarship submissions were received, with the 10 winners demonstrating their commitment to improving the health outcomes for rural communities around Australia.

"The scholarship winners are all potential future leaders in rural health and have displayed outstanding commitment to the delivery of the highest levels of health care, with many already contributing to rural communities through their studies," Ms Blakey said.

"HESTA is proud to support these students as they begin their careers. It's also particularly pleasing to contribute to the professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rural health students as part of our Reconciliation Action Plan that supports efforts to close the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

The scholarship winners are:

- **Kelleigh Allport** – medicine, University of Newcastle (BREAATHHE Rural Health Club)
- **Ellie Bowditch** – medicine, University of Melbourne (OUTLOOK Rural Health Club)
- **Katie Brett** – nursing, University of New England (NERCHA Rural Health Club)
- **Hollie Fisher** – occupational therapy, James Cook University (RHINO Rural Health Club)
- **Emily Higham** – medicine, University of Western Australia (SPINRPHEX Rural Health Club)
- **Katie Hobbs** – medicine, University of Sydney (MIRAGE Rural Health Club)
- **Sarah Langley** – social work, La Trobe University (LARHC Rural Health Club)
- **Alice Melton** – nutrition and dietetics, University of Newcastle (BREAATHHE Rural Health Club)
- **Marissa Norman** – nursing, Flinders University (FURHS Rural Health Club)
- **Jessie Stone** – nursing, James Cook University (RHINO Rural Health Club)

Candidates were assessed with particular emphasis on their commitment to practising in rural Australia.

Scholarship winner Kelleigh Allport says her career goal is to return to rural communities to help address inequity in rural and Aboriginal health.

"As a young Aboriginal medical student, I know of the need for Aboriginal doctors in rural areas who have a better understanding of the cultural needs of the community, making healthcare more accessible to Indigenous people."

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Aboriginal nursing student Katie Brett has a special interest in health promotion, public health and primary health care in Indigenous communities.

"I want to be able to educate my people about health issues that may affect them, promote healthier lifestyle choices that will reduce the risk of chronic disease and help people live longer and healthier lives."

RHWA Chair, Dr Ross Maxwell, hopes the scholarship winners will be inspired by the opportunity to rub shoulders with and hear from some of the leaders in Australian rural and remote health.

"Young people like this represent the future of rural health and we are delighted that HESTA has chosen to invest in them."

The scholarship covers the costs of flights, accommodation and registration for the four-day conference, hosted by the National Rural Health Alliance – an umbrella body for 38 national organisations committed to improving the health and wellbeing of the seven million people who live in rural and remote Australia.

## **Ends**

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